United Nations

Report of the World Food Council

on the work of its eighteenth session

23–26 June 1992

General Assembly
Official Records • Forty-seventh Session
Supplement No. 19 (A/47/19)

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ABBREVIATIONS

CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
EEC	European Economic Community
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ISNAR	International Service for National Agricultural Research
SADCC	Southern African Development Coordination Conference
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
WFP	World Food Programme

PART ONE

MATTERS BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE WORLD FOOD COUNCIL
AT ITS EIGHTEENTH MINISTERIAL SESSION

1. Under the Presidency of Mr. Issa Kalantari, Minister of Agriculture of the Islamic Republic of Iran, we, the Ministers and plenipotentiaries of the World Food Council, met for our eighteenth session at Nairobi, from 23 to 26 June 1992. We reviewed the progress made in following up on the recommendations adopted at our seventeenth session. 1/ We also examined the challenges for the World Food Council in the fight against hunger that are posed by the need in a rapidly changing world for greater political leadership and improved coordination.

2. Events since the Council's last ministerial session in June 1991 give rise to both hope and concern. The great hopes for peace and accelerated development raised by the end of the cold war are compromised by the persistence of regional conflicts and the emergence of new tensions in several parts of the world. However, overall trends point in the direction of a new world order taking shape, in which equity and justice will prevail over confrontation. There can be no lasting peace or prosperity as long as millions of people continue to endure an existence defined by poverty and hunger.

3. As we approach the third millennium, the challenges posed by hunger, poverty, population growth and environmental decline are greater than ever - but so also are the opportunities to deal with them with more determination and effectiveness. The just-concluded Earth Summit - the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held at Rio de Janeiro from 3 to 14 June 1992 - was an important step towards creating a new spirit of partnership and cooperation among the nations of an increasingly interdependent world. For the first time, the world community recognized its global responsibility for the environment and sustainable development, emphasizing that human productive activities must be in harmony with nature; this is probably most directly felt in the production of food.

The global state of hunger and malnutrition

4. Most developing regions have made some headway in the 1980s in reducing the proportion of hungry and malnourished people in the total population. Major progress has been achieved in parts of Asia also in reducing the absolute number of the hungry poor, although the majority of the world's hungry is still to be found in Asia. The largest increases in the numbers of hungry people have been in Africa, while increases in Latin America and the Caribbean have been relatively small.

5. We are particularly alarmed by the fact that the total number of the world's malnourished children has increased in the 1980s, especially in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. While greater attention is now being given to the elimination of nutritional diseases caused by iodine deficiency, vitamin-A deficiency and iron deficiency, progress is not yet commensurate with the potential and economic affordability of existing means to eradicate these kinds of malnutrition.

6. Millions of people in the Eastern European region, including the Commonwealth of Independent States, find it increasingly difficult to gain access to adequate food, as a consequence of the transitional effects of economic reforms. In several parts of the region, women and children face serious nutritional risks. Some countries encounter serious national food supply shortages. These, in particular, will need, beyond short-term relief assistance, also longer-term aid from the international community to overcome their structural food-security problems.

7. Insufficient economic development on the one hand, and population growth in many countries on the other hand, will make an early eradication of hunger and malnutrition difficult, but greater priority to focusing development efforts on specific hunger-alleviation goals provides opportunities for accelerated progress.

8. Council members have committed themselves to working together to meet the four hunger-alleviation goals of the Cairo Declaration, 2/ which have also been adopted by the United Nations family of nations at large, in the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade (General Assembly resolution 45/199, annex). Countries and the international community must now focus their energies on translating commitment into action. The International Conference on Nutrition, to be held in Rome from 5 to 11 December 1992, will be an important opportunity for countries to demonstrate the progress achieved in this regard and the concrete plans for action in the years ahead.

An appeal to the international community to help reverse Africa's deteriorating food and hunger situation

9. Meeting in Africa, we are acutely aware of the tragic long-term deterioration of the region's food, hunger, socio-economic and environmental situation. In addition, sub-Saharan Africa has been plagued by recurrent food emergencies and famines of major dimensions, caused by natural disasters as well as wars and civil strife. All over the world, there are tensions which are diverting people's energy away from productive activities, but no other continent is experiencing tensions arising from internal conflicts as broadly as Africa.

10. Twenty countries with about one half of the population of sub-Saharan Africa are currently confronting serious food emergencies, and the threat of famine and epidemic diseases is now probably more severe than in earlier disaster years of Africa's recent history. In addition to the loss of human lives and to the tragedy of human suffering, the whole social and economic fabric of their societies is at stake in the affected countries.

11. Food emergencies threatening the lives of millions of people continue in the Horn of Africa and parts of central and west Africa. Moreover, the worst drought in decades spells the risk of starvation for up to 18 million people in southern Africa. There, this year's cereal production is expected to be about half of normal and import requirements will rise steeply, to over 11 million tons, when only 2 million tons is the normal level. The cereal food-aid requirements of southern Africa alone are estimated at 5 million tons. With continued large-scale food-aid requirements in several other countries, particularly in the Horn of Africa, total food-aid needs could reach extraordinary levels.

12. We welcome the appeal of 26 May 1992 of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to assist the drought-affected southern African countries and express our satisfaction about the pledges made at the pledging conference held at Geneva on 1 and 2 June 1992. At the same time, we call on all countries in a position to help to provide further resources very urgently needed for covering the large remaining gap between the pledges made so far and the Secretary-General's target of $856 million to meet the most acute emergency needs.

13. The efforts in connection with the current emergency situations in sub-Saharan Africa are a reminder that improved effectiveness is required when responding to emergency situations. They point to the importance of strengthening the national capacities of countries to prevent and to deal effectively and efficiently with emergencies and disasters. At the international level, we welcome the establishment of the new high-level position of Emergency Relief Coordinator for the United Nations.

14. Immediate humanitarian assistance to southern Africa and other emergency-affected countries is vital. But beyond short-term relief, Africa needs more effective, sustained cooperation to prevent its further marginalization on the world development map and to build a healthy future for itself. African countries must continue to work to create conditions that foster broad-based economic growth and political stability. Without that stability, investments in agriculture and other economic sectors inevitably fail. Their efforts must be supported by the international community through sustained financial, technical and other assistance, as well as economic cooperation.

15. Within the food and agriculture sector, national food strategies remain a very useful means for advancing food production, food self-reliance and better access to food. We welcome the assistance provided by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Bank, the World Food Programme (WFP) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in this field and encourage improved food strategy cooperation among multilateral agencies. Food strategies also need to be more closely integrated with structural adjustment programmes.

16. In this connection, we noted the importance of the IFAD Special Programme for Sub-Saharan African Countries Affected by Drought and Desertification, and urge the donors to contribute generously to this programme to enable IFAD to reach the target of $300 million, as appealed for by African countries.

A new Green Revolution

17. Last year, we re-examined the need for a new Green Revolution. We are satisfied by the positive response to our Helsingør recommendations in this field, received from the various international institutions, as reported by the Executive Director. While we believe that Africa should receive priority attention in a new Green Revolution effort, we are convinced that other developing regions must seriously begin now to address their food-production challenges of the twenty-first century. In this context, we found most helpful the paper entitled "Towards a New Green Revolution", prepared for the Council by the secretariat of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), and support the recommendation of intensified transfer of appropriate technology contained therein.

18. Given Africa's precarious long-term food trends, Africa must launch its own indigenous Green Revolution. We therefore urgently call for harnessing the many ongoing activities in the field of agricultural research, technology development and application in the region for an African Green Revolution, which would emphasize the traditional staple foods critical to the food security of the African people, use an appropriate mix of proven existing and new technology, focusing on both rain-fed and irrigated agriculture, give adequate consideration to socio-economic equity issues and ensure environmental sustainability. In this connection, we emphasize the importance of a better utilization of existing resources and research capacities.

19. The potential for a Green Revolution in Africa will be attained only if it takes into account specific conditions in different agro-ecological zones. We agree with the secretariat's proposal for a series of subregional meetings, under the technical direction of CGIAR, to sharpen action priorities, possibly with the sponsorship of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and bilateral donors. Such meetings could also further explore the scope for pursuing agricultural research and technology efforts in the broader perspective of subregional integrated agricultural development plans between countries with similar agro-ecological conditions.

20. Working towards a new Green Revolution in developing countries, particularly in Africa, will require substantial increases in investments in research, extension and training, including external assistance. The problems of national and regional food crises, the depletion of many natural resources, the need to slow down rural migration through necessary development of rural areas, will all require more attention to the role of agricultural research. A new Green Revolution effort calls for close cooperation between all international and national organizations concerned with the scientific, technical and financial aspects of agricultural research, technology development and application. We recommend that this item be retained on the Council's future agenda.

<u>The implications of the changes in Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States for food security in developing countries</u>

21. Council members stress that all future support to the Eastern European region must remain additional to official development assistance (ODA) flows to the developing countries and must by no means divert needed assistance from the developing countries.

22. We are confident that economic progress and a successful transformation of the economies of Eastern Europe will be stimulating for the world economy and of great benefit for the developing world, too. A reduction of net food imports in this region, which is already apparent in some countries, could result in a net export situation in the long run by mobilizing the large food production potential of this area. This could ease world market prices for food with a positive effect for most net food importing developing countries. Economic progress would also enable the countries of the region to resume and expand their development assistance to developing countries.

23. Many developing countries will in addition gain from the changing trade patterns and the expanded opportunities for food and non-food trade with Eastern Europe. However, changing patterns of financial flows at commercial

terms, with substantial amounts going to Eastern Europe, could have negative effects in developing countries, especially in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. In general, a successful transformation of the economies in Eastern Europe will contribute to greater food security globally and in low-income food-deficit developing countries in particular.

The state of the multilateral trade negotiations in the Uruguay Round

24. At our Helsingør session last year, we sent an urgent message to the multilateral trade negotiators of the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), 3/ drawing their attention to the most disturbing effect that the lack of conclusion of the Round has on food security in developing countries and their economies in general, and the restraints it places on world agricultural trade. Since then, some progress has been achieved. However, we are most concerned that progress is slow despite movement by all parties. We call upon all participants in the Uruguay Round to use the proposal tabled in December 1991 by the Director-General of GATT as a basis for their negotiations to reach a successful conclusion of the Round so much desired by all Council members.

Migration and food security

25. We also reviewed the follow-up to our deliberations of last year on the issue of migration and food security. The consultations undertaken by the Executive Director with member Governments and international agencies have further highlighted the seriousness and complexities of the problem as one of the potentially major political and development challenges during the transition from the second to the third millennium. In addition to migration within and between developing countries, there is pressure for mass movements of people, from south to north and from east to west, of potentially unprecedented dimensions in modern history. Some migration flows can be more easily traced to food-insecurity causes than others, although true causal relationships are often difficult to determine.

26. The problem of refugees and displaced people and the issue of migration and food security are important enough to be kept on the United Nations agenda until appropriate action in the relevant operational institutions is assured. We request the secretariat to encourage further study and policy development in this field, and agree to review progress in the future.

Hunger-alleviation targets and a greater hunger focus in domestic policies and supporting aid programmes

27. We note with satisfaction the action by member countries to translate the Cairo hunger-alleviation goals into feasible domestic targets, taking advantage of the preparatory process for the forthcoming International Conference on Nutrition, as agreed upon at Helsingør. In this connection, we also express our appreciation for the important reports submitted to us by the World Bank and IFAD on their experiences with hunger-focused poverty-alleviation programmes and projects. These will be of assistance to countries in formulating policies and programmes in support of their hunger-alleviation targets and constitute an important input into the future work of the Council and other relevant United Nations bodies in this area.

The future role of the World Food Council in a changing United Nations

28. Our agenda included a review of the future role of the Council in a changing global economic and social environment, with its important ramifications for the fight against hunger.

29. We welcome the efforts by the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the General Assembly to streamline the activities of the United Nations in the economic and social field for the purpose of increased efficiency and effectiveness. The future role of the Council must be seen in the framework of this overall restructuring process.

30. We agree that the Council has fallen short of achieving the political leadership and coordination role expected from its founders at the 1974 World Food Conference. More specifically, our views and recommendations can be summarized as follows:

31. There is consensus that the objectives of the World Food Conference, which the Council is to pursue, are as important today as they were in 1974. Food and hunger issues must remain at the centre of national and international development efforts.

32. There is broadly based agreement that, in a rapidly changing world, there can be no continuation of the status quo for the World Food Council or for the United Nations as a whole.

33. There is therefore general agreement on the need for review of the role and functioning of the Council placed into the wider context of global food security management and the overall restructuring of the social and economic activities of the United Nations system.

34. We discussed a framework for the views communicated for the General Assembly's consideration. We agreed to establish an ad hoc committee to develop further specific proposals. All member States are invited to participate in the ad hoc committee at a level of minister or his delegate. The committee would meet in mid-September 1992. It would prepare a report ad referendum which would then, on behalf of the Council, be submitted by the President of the Council to the President of the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session. A detailed timetable is annexed to these conclusions and recommendations. The Council also recommended, in view of the global food situation and close linkage between the environment and food production, and considering the importance of the recent United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, that the ad hoc committee should consider recommending to the General Assembly the possibility of holding a second World Food Conference in 1994.

35. The Council proposed that the General Assembly, in its restructuring of the economic and social system of the United Nations, review the mandate, operations and future role of the World Food Council after taking into account the report of the ad hoc committee, which is to be submitted by October 1992.

36. The task of the ad hoc committee would be to review issues related to the current global management and coordination of food-security and hunger-alleviation programmes and to elaborate proposals for their

improvement. Within this context, the ad hoc committee would seek to define the possible future contribution of the World Food Council and make specific proposals respecting the Council's mandate, functions and options for its future role.

37. The ad hoc committee would not only draw on written submissions by Council members, but also on proposals made at the Council's eighteenth ministerial session, including those related to independent identity, relationship to other agencies, location of secretariat, venue, agenda and frequency of ministerial sessions.

ANNEX

Timetable for the ad hoc committee on the review of the World Food Council

1 July 1992	Secretariat starts drafting background document
31 July	Last date for submission, by member States, of proposals for consideration by the ad hoc committee
31 July	Last date for submission by Governments of nominations to the ad hoc committee
Mid-September	Ad hoc committee meets for two days to develop proposals for consideration by the General Assembly
20 September	Ad hoc committee report finalized, and referred to capitals
10 October	Last day for receiving referral communications in the secretariat
10-15 October	Letter from the President of the World Food Council to the President of the General Assembly transmitting the ad hoc committee report

PART TWO

PROCEEDINGS OF THE COUNCIL

I. ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

1. The eighteenth ministerial session of the World Food Council was held at Nairobi from 23 to 26 June 1992. It was opened by the President of the Council, Mr. Issa Kalantari, Minister for Agriculture of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in the presence of Mr. Daniel Toroitich arap Moi, President of Kenya. A message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations was read by the Executive Director, Mr. Gerald Ion Trant. The Minister for Agriculture of Kenya, Mr. E. W. Mwangale, also addressed the gathering. The President of Kenya delivered the inaugural address.

A. Membership of the Council

2. At the time of the session, the Council comprised the following 36 States: Albania,*** Argentina,* Australia,*** Bangladesh,** Bulgaria,** Burundi,* Canada,** Central African Republic,*** China,** Colombia,** Denmark,* Egypt,* France,* Gambia,** Germany,*** Guatemala,*** Honduras,*** Hungary,* Indonesia,*** Iran (Islamic Republic of),* Italy,* Japan,* Kenya,** Lesotho,** Mexico,** Nepal,** Nicaragua,*** Peru,* Russian Federation,*** Rwanda,* Swaziland,*** Thailand,*** Turkey,** Uganda,*** United States of America** and Yemen.*

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* Term of office expires on 31 December 1992.
** Term of office expires on 31 December 1993.
*** Term of office expires on 31 December 1994.

B. Attendance

3. The session was attended by the following States members of the Council: Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh, Burundi, Canada, Central African Republic, China, Colombia, Denmark, Egypt, France, Gambia, Germany, Hungary, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Italy, Japan, Kenya, Lesotho, Mexico, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Swaziland, Thailand, Turkey, Uganda and United States of America.

4. Observers from the following States non-members of the Council were present: Cameroon, Greece, Holy See, India, Iraq, Israel, Namibia, Netherlands, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

5. The following United Nations bodies and specialized agencies were represented: Department of Economic and Social Development of the Secretariat, Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), UNDP, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), WFP, FAO, IFAD, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and World Bank.

6. Observers from the following intergovernmental organizations were present: African Development Bank, Commonwealth Secretariat, European Economic Community and Islamic Development Bank.

7. Observers from the following non-governmental organizations were also present: International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology, International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center, International Service for National Agricultural Research and Manor House Agricultural Centre-Kitale.

C. Officers

8. The following officers of the Council were present:

President: Mr. Issa Kalantari (Islamic Republic of Iran)

Vice-Presidents: Mr. Elijah W. Mwangale (Kenya)
Mr. Carlos Torres Manzo (Mexico)
Mr. Anatoly N. Lifanchikov (Russian Federation)
Mr. Necmettin Cevheri (Turkey)

D. Agenda

9. The Council adopted the following agenda (WFC/1992/1) for the session:

1. Opening of the session and adoption of the agenda.

2. Progress report of the Executive Director:

   (a) The global state of hunger and malnutrition: 1992 report;

   (b) Implications of the changes in Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States for food security in developing countries;

   (c) Towards a new Green Revolution;

   (d) Migration and food security;

   (e) Hunger-alleviation targets in domestic policies and supporting aid programmes;

   (f) The state of the multilateral agricultural trade negotiations in the GATT Uruguay Round.

3. The importance of greater political leadership and coordination by a strengthened Council in the fight against hunger.

4. Other business.

5. Report of the Council to the the United Nations General Assembly at its forty-seventh session.

E. Documentation

10. The documents before the Council at its eighteenth session are listed in the annex to the present report.

II. ACCOUNT OF PROCEEDINGS

A. Opening statements

11. At the opening ceremony, honoured by the presence of the President of Kenya, Mr. Daniel Toroitich arap Moi, the President of the World Food Council, Mr. Issa Kalantari, Minister for Agriculture of the Islamic Republic of Iran, welcomed delegates and expressed the Council's gratitude to the Government and people of Kenya for the opportunity of holding its eighteenth session at Nairobi.

12. Meeting in the heart of Africa, said the President, made it compelling for the session to give special attention to the predicament of the African people. He drew the urgent attention of delegates to the continent's worsening food and hunger trends, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, where severe food emergencies and famine continued in the wake of natural disasters, war and civil strife. In southern and eastern Africa, a further 18 million were at risk of famine. The President expressed satisfaction at the initial response to the Secretary-General's recent appeal for assistance to the drought-affected countries of southern Africa, but called on all countries in a position to help to provide the resources needed to cover the gap of over $300 million between pledges made so far and the Secretary-General's target of $856 million to meet the most acute emergency needs.

13. While immediate humanitarian assistance to drought-affected countries was vital, Africa needed more effective, sustained cooperation from the international community to build a healthy future for itself. Given the region's precarious long-term food trends, the President made an urgent call for an African Green Revolution, based on agricultural research, technology development and application in the region, covering the foodstuffs critical to the food security of the African people.

14. On the overall picture of global hunger and poverty, the President expressed concern at the general deterioration of the social and economic conditions in many low-income economies and the serious difficulties faced by economies in the Eastern European countries and the new independent States. In this connection, he felt encouraged by the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, 4/ which emphasized, among other issues, the responsibility of all States and all people to cooperate in the essential task of eradicating poverty.

15. The important task before Ministers at their eighteenth session, the President said, was to assess how member countries had started to implement the four hunger-alleviation goals which they had adopted at Cairo in 1989. Later in the session, he would present some of his ideas for strengthening the World Food Council. He expressed the belief that a strong Council that gave more specific policy guidance to the members of the United Nations organizations having to do with food security was vital for the increased effectiveness and efficiency of the system in solving the hunger problem.

16. In a message read on his behalf by the Executive Director, the Secretary-General of the United Nations underlined the paramount importance of hunger- and poverty-elimination to lasting peace and prosperity. He stressed

that only when political will was present and concerted efforts were made to attack the cause of poverty could hunger and malnutrition be eliminated. To this end, he urged Council members and Governments which had committed themselves to a course of cooperative action and to setting an example for the rest of the world to move from commitment to action.

17. In this connection, the Secretary-General recalled the four important hunger-alleviation goals that the Council members had pledged to fulfil by the end of the decade and which had subsequently been incorporated into the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade. These goals were designed to eliminate starvation and death caused by famine, achieve a tangible reduction in chronic hunger, reduce substantially malnutrition and mortality among young children, and eliminate major nutritional-deficiency diseases. He recognized the endeavour by Council members to translate these goals into action, as set out in the substantive items for ministerial deliberation at the current session.

18. Turning to the reforms that the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council had initiated of their functioning and of the structures of their subsidiary bodies, the Secretary-General mentioned his ongoing restructuring efforts at the Secretariat level. He assured Council members that, as the reform process continued, ways of enhancing the role and contribution of the specialized agencies and financial institutions to policy development and action for the eradication of hunger and malnutrition, as well as measures for strengthening system-wide coordination, would be given all necessary attention. The Secretary-General expressed his belief that the outcome of the Council's consideration of the substantive items before it would provide a very valuable input to this process.

19. In his inaugural speech, Mr. Daniel T. arap Moi, President of Kenya, called urgent attention to the emergency situation in Africa caused by the recent drought and by internal conflicts. He noted that at the time of the eighteenth ministerial session of the World Food Council, millions of people in the region were faced with starvation. Nowhere in the world was the suffering of mankind as grave as in Africa.

20. The President stressed that the long-term solution to problems facing humankind was more political than technical. In this regard, he noted with appreciation that the World Food Council had been set up to raise the political profile and priority of global food issues, and he reaffirmed the responsibility of humankind as a whole to ensure that nobody would die because of lack of food.

21. To tackle the problems facing Africa effectively, the President underlined the need for adopting massive and coordinated national, subregional, regional and global food strategies. In this respect, the concept of a "Green Revolution" relevant to the African situation should be seriously considered, with more emphasis on the production of drought-resistant crops. Furthermore, the President proposed that appropriate measures be taken, including:

(a) Strengthening the national capacities of developing countries to deal effectively and efficiently with emergencies and disasters;

(b) Assessing the future of the World Food Council as the United Nations body politically responsible for taking concrete and practical measures to solve global hunger problems;

(c) Enhancing research and development and technological activities, especially in semi-arid zones of the region, with a view to increasing productivity;

(d) Involving local populations in development and decision-making processes affecting their own lives.

22. In conclusion, the President urged that the goals of the Cairo Declaration 2/ adopted by the Council at its fifteenth session in 1989 be brought into sharp focus at the current session, and that the Council come up with practical suggestions to eradicate the indignities associated with hunger and malnutrition.

B. General debate

23. In a brief presentation, the President of the World Food Council shared with the Ministers some of his ideas on the necessity and means for improving the functioning of the Council. He examined some of the recent conclusions and recommendations of the Council, but observed that the world was still a long way from eliminating the scourge of hunger. As the impact of the Council had been less than was desirable, the President raised the issue of how the Council could become more effective in the fight against hunger.

24. He emphasized that, in order to succeed in this endeavour, the Council would, instead of giving general advice, have to be much more specific in its recommendations to individual institutions. Now is the time, he said, for the World Food Council to provide clearer and more effective direction and coordination for the 30 or so international organizations of the United Nations system concerned to some degree with food, hunger and poverty matters. This coordination and guidance would have to be based on a disinterested, sound and competent evaluation of agency performance in relation to food-security issues.

25. The President observed that the mandate of the Council was broad enough to give effective policy direction for global food security to the institutions of the multilateral system. He considered improved and increased monitoring of the multilateral institutions in relation to the food-security issue an essential component to fulfil the mandate. Such monitoring would provide the basis for the Council secretariat to prepare more useful documents for consideration and subsequent recommendations by the Council to the international institutions. In order to achieve a more effective functioning of the Council, there was a need, the President said, for a strengthened and separately identifiable secretariat, with an Executive Director at an upgraded level. As for the timing of ministerial sessions, he considered an annual meeting to review the Council's work necessary.

1. Progress report of the Executive Director

(Agenda item 2; WFC/1992/2, WFC/1992/3 and Add.1 and 2)

26. In presenting his progress report, the Executive Director placed the acute famine threat in southern Africa against the background of continuing natural disasters. This made clear, he said, that sub-Saharan Africa urgently needed more effective strategies for famine prevention. The Executive Director stressed that famine prevention policies, including food-security projects, needed to be re-examined and changed in the light of recent events.

27. Referring to the 1992 report on the global state of hunger and malnutrition, and the secretariat assessment of the implications of the transition process in Eastern Europe and the new independent States, the Executive Director highlighted the increasing divergence of trends in hunger and poverty between regions and nations. The deterioration of the situation in sub-Saharan Africa contrasted sharply with progress in hunger- and poverty-reduction in East and South Asia. While there had been widespread erosion of access to food among vulnerable groups in Eastern Europe and the new independent States, the national food-security situation in the region was highly variable.

28. The Executive Director introduced briefly the follow-up given to the recommendations of the Council at its seventeenth ministerial session on a new Green Revolution; migration and food security; hunger-alleviation targets in domestic policies and supporting aid programmes; the Uruguay Round; and coordination among the Rome-based food agencies.

(a) The global state of hunger and malnutrition: 1992 report

29. The current severe drought seriously affecting most of southern Africa and some countries in eastern Africa dominated discussions on the global state of hunger and malnutrition. Echoing the grave concern expressed in the opening statements, delegates unanimously emphasized the urgent need for delivering rapid and coordinated relief assistance to the affected regions so that the widespread starvation that otherwise would occur in the latter half of 1992 could be effectively dealt with. In the SADCC region alone, 18 million people were threatened by famine, requiring 5 million tons of cereal food aid. In the Horn of Africa, because of civil strife and massive movements of refugees and returnees, millions of people continued to be threatened by hunger and starvation.

30. Many participants drew attention to the long-run implications of the current drought for food security in Africa. Some delegates noted with great concern that, if the drought-stricken countries failed to achieve speedy recovery, prospects for agricultural production and economic activities in general could be adversely affected. The process of economic reform initiated in a number of African countries could be brought to a standstill. It was therefore imperative that the Governments concerned, in close collaboration with and with assistance from bilateral, regional and multilateral development agencies, devise effective long-term food-security programmes, with strong emphasis on famine prevention and disaster relief.

31. Many participants pointed out that the current food crisis in Africa came on top of a worsening incidence of poverty in the region. Between 1985 and 1991, the number of extremely poor in sub-Saharan Africa had increased by 20 million, from 120 to 140 million. Furthermore, sub-Saharan Africa was the only region in the world that had experienced an increase in both the absolute number of malnourished children and their share in total child population. Worldwide, the number of underweight children in all developing countries had grown from 167 million in 1980 to 188 million in 1990. Sub-Saharan Africa alone accounted for approximately half of this increase. Also, the absolute number of child deaths in sub-Saharan Africa had increased during the 1980s. In sharp contrast, encouraging and substantial progress in hunger- and poverty-reduction had been made by a number of countries in East and South Asia.

32. At a time when the number of the chronically hungry in the developing world was estimated at more than 550 million and was expected to grow in most regions, global food supply was coming under pressure. Some delegates remarked with concern that in 1991 global food production declined for the first time since 1983, and draw-down of stocks was expected for all types of cereals. They emphasized that efforts to increase agricultural production should not be limited to ensuring supplies of inputs. Adequate attention should be accorded to issues, such as land title and access to credit by small farmers, particularly women farmers. Moreover, especially in rural areas, family planning should be promoted to complement efforts at increasing food production.

33. A number of delegates also pointed out that ensuring adequate aggregate supplies of food staples, although desirable and necessary, needed to be accompanied by measures aimed at improving the poor's access to food. Long-term food security could not be achieved if the purchasing power of the poor and vulnerable could not be increased and sustained. In this respect, delegates agreed that productive employment for the poor constituted a key to ensuring food security for the hungry poor. A number of delegates recounted their own countries' experiences in fulfilling this task.

34. Delegates agreed that the long-term solution to the problems of hunger and malnutrition was more political than technical. They stated that the principles and motives underlying the creation of the World Food Council 18 years earlier remained sound, valid and unchallengeable today. Now, the hunger problem was more complex, diverse and - in a number of regions and among certain population groups - more persistent than ever before.

35. Specific national experiences amply showed that when political will was mobilized and concerted efforts were made, hunger and malnutrition could be alleviated. In this respect, delegates reaffirmed their Governments' commitment to the fight against hunger and poverty, while recognizing their primary responsibility in this difficult undertaking. At the same time, it was also a shared view among member States that it was the common mission of the community of nations as a whole to achieve the eradication of the scourge of hunger and poverty and to ensure that the four hunger-alleviation goals of the Council's Cairo Declaration be realized by the end of the decade. To this end, developed countries should open their markets to developing countries, especially in the area of agricultural products, and assist in facilitating sustained resource flows to developing countries.

(b) Implications of the changes in Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States for food security in developing countries

36. Introducing this question, the Executive Director drew attention to the widespread erosion of access to food among vulnerable groups in Eastern Europe and the new independent States. The need for efficient social safety nets was immediate and great, he said. Referring to the background documentation before the Ministers, he also stressed that food-security and development conditions in the region were extremely diverse. The background documentation further concluded that the transition in the food sector in Eastern Europe and the new independent States was unlikely to have major negative effects on food security in developing countries, while for some countries even positive effects could be foreseen.

37. In the debate, certain Eastern European members elaborated on the difficulties encountered with liberalization and privatization in the food and agricultural sector, related to higher input prices, land reform, lack of credit and capital, uncertainties, etc. In their countries, and in other Eastern European countries, food production was somewhat lower than in previous years, but effective demand for food had also declined, pointing to an impact on developing countries' food security as sketched in the background documentation. Optimism was voiced that the reform process in Eastern Europe and the new independent States would yield tangible results in the future.

38. Some developed country members stated that the transition process in Eastern Europe and the new independent States deserved to be supported by aid, technical assistance and the opening up of markets. It was noted, however, that this should not result in a diversion of aid away from developing countries. In this connection, an East European member emphasized that the type of assistance needed by Eastern Europe did not in fact compete with development aid. And one developed country member stated that aid to Eastern Europe would not be given at the expense of developing countries.

39. The representative of the Russian Federation, Council Vice-President Lifanchikov, extended an invitation to hold a World Food Council consultation in Moscow on food-security issues in Eastern Europe and the Russian Federation.

(c) Towards a new Green Revolution

40. Following the outcome of a WFC/UNDP interregional consultation, held at Cairo in April 1991 at the initiative of the then World Food Council President, Mr. Youssef Amin Wally, Deputy Prime Minister of Egypt and Minister for Agriculture and Land Reclamation, the Council decided at its seventeenth ministerial session to pursue further the initiative to launch a new Green Revolution. After a series of consultations by the secretariat with international organizations and United Nations organizations regarding follow-up on the subject of the Green Revolution, there appeared to be a consensus view on the urgent need for food production breakthroughs in the developing regions, based on agricultural research, technology development and application. The secretariat was exploring the possibilities of subregional meetings, starting with Africa, to further sharpen priorities and requirements for an African Green Revolution in different agro-ecological zones.

41. During discussions on this question, Ministers agreed that a Green Revolution was most pressing for Africa, which had been largely by-passed by the first one. At the same time, they observed that world agriculture faced multiple social and economic challenges. To bring about a new Green Revolution would therefore require an integrated development strategy which also would take into account the principles adopted on environmental protection at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

42. Several delegates emphasized that the main task of a new Green Revolution would be to bring about an important increase in yields and food production. A new Green Revolution would stress the importance of an enhanced global effort in agricultural research which would link the international agricultural research centres with national agricultural research systems, backed by sustained support from Governments and multilateral institutions. It would also integrate socio-economic, equity and sustainability concerns and be based on agro-ecological zones at the outset.

43. The need for research on traditional crops, such as maize, millet, sorghum, pulses and tuber crops, especially the drought-tolerant varieties important for Africa's food security, was stressed. As these crops are traditionally grown by women, their promotion would not only enhance household food security but would also give women greater control over food resources. Considering Africa's experience with excessively high post-harvest losses, the new Green Revolution would need to give priority to development of appropriate low-cost on-farm storage technologies.

44. The deliberations of the Ministers benefited from a statement by the representative of CGIAR, the Director of the International Service for National Agricultural Research (ISNAR). He noted that, despite the progress made by the different international and national agricultural research centres in the last 25 years to maximize food production, poverty had not been eradicated. Among the reasons for this were the greatly expanded world population which had to be provided with food and - from the agricultural research point of view - a research agenda that was constantly enlarging and now dealt not only with food production but also with management of natural resources and the collection, management and preservation of germ plasm. A Green Revolution for Africa would require greater efforts in terms of scientific manpower, financial resources, information technology, infrastructure and institution building, considering the wide diversity in agro-ecological zones and the wide range of relatively unimproved staple food crops, each of which required sustained research.

45. Ministers agreed that a series of subregional meetings in Africa, perhaps sponsored by UNDP or bilateral donors, could lead to more specific measures in setting research and extension priorities. Such subregional meetings would actively involve farmers, as well as policy makers and researchers, in identifying the needed resources and other requirements for an African Green Revolution in different agro-ecological zones.

(d) Migration and food security

46. In 1991, the Council decided to include in its future work programme the issue of the possible consequences of major migration flows for the food security of developing countries. In the follow-up to this recommendation,

the secretariat sought to identify more clearly migration policy issues related to food security, and the future role of the Council in this area. As the Executive Director mentioned when introducing this question, the secretariat had benefited from the assessments made by many other agencies as well as Council members.

47. In the debate, Ministers agreed that migration was a problem of major developmental and political significance, some of whose dimensions were likely to pose increasing challenges in the future. The magnitude of the problem had grown since the previous year and the risk of large and accelerated migration was an issue of ever-increasing importance. Delegates also noted the prevalence of hunger and malnutrition among migrants, who were often forced into migration by food insecurity.

48. There was general agreement with the conclusion reached in the background documentation that distress migration is more closely related to food security than to livelihood migration and, given the disruptive nature of the former, policy emphasis should be on the prevention of the conditions leading to distress. In contrast, livelihood migration is mainly a labour-market phenomenon, which should be addressed primarily in terms of the functioning of labour markets, related employment policies and employment-oriented technology and investment strategies. However, it was held that further study and analysis was necessary on migration and food security in general, with emphasis on distress migration.

49. Concerning future Council involvement in the migration field, Ministers in general agreed with the conclusions and recommendations of the secretariat. In particular, they wanted the Council to continue to highlight the problem of migration and food security until appropriate action in the relevant operational institutions was assured.

(e) Hunger-alleviation targets in domestic policies and supporting aid programmes

50. At its sixteenth session, at Bangkok in 1990, the Council had called for further assessments of food-strategy experience in Africa, with a view to improving policy design and implementation to meet the food-security challenges of the 1990s. Such assessments were undertaken in 1991 in Kenya, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zimbabwe, with the support of the United States Department of Agriculture and the Agency for International Development. A report on the assessments was now in preparation.

51. In the debate, some delegates highlighted the concept of national food strategies, which provided a framework for promoting rural and agricultural development, with a distinct and strong emphasis on hunger- and poverty-alleviation. A number of Ministers held that the implementation of food strategies was fundamental for the achievement of food security in developing countries, and should be supported by the international community. Some member States were implementing food strategies within structural adjustment programmes, with the basic objectives of increasing food production, creating employment, improving nutrition and providing protection against famine. Experience with FAO food-security programmes in some countries in Africa underlined the importance of identifying the food-insecure populations and of sequencing the implementation of different components of a food-security action programme.

52. A number of delegates introduced their countries' recent experience in hunger- and poverty-alleviation and in achieving long-term food security. By placing hunger- and poverty-alleviation at the top of the national agenda, those countries had achieved remarkable progress in increasing food production, creating productive employment for the poor and ensuring sustained income flows to poor households. Some of those countries had undertaken structural reforms, adopting more market-oriented economic policies. More importantly, the Governments of those countries had exercised the political will and leadership essential to guide and promote new policies and new courses of action. Delegates from several countries in East and South Asia reported that they had achieved important successes in combining economic growth with human development. A number of delegates commented on the poverty-alleviation approaches of IFAD and the World Bank. It was clear from their discussions that both the World Bank's two-pronged strategy of combining efficient, labour-absorbing growth with investment in human-resource development, supplemented by safety nets for vulnerable groups, and the emphasis of IFAD on participatory rural development through mobilizing the creativity and initiative of small farmers, were sound and merited wider application. In particular, one developing country member reported on its very positive experience with the IFAD approach in participatory development.

53. Introducing their domestic efforts at hunger- and poverty-alleviation, several delegates also referred to the ongoing preparations for the International Conference on Nutrition, scheduled for 5-11 December 1992. They expressed the hope that Council members would take advantage of this opportunity to further clarify their domestic nutrition policies and set specific and realistic targets for hunger alleviation based on recent country assessments of their nutrition situation. It was also emphasized that the momentum generated by that Conference should be maintained, by effective follow-up through such measures as implementing national programmes of action aimed at ameliorating the nutrition status of the population.

(f) <u>The state of the multilateral agricultural trade negotiations in the GATT Uruguay Round</u>

54. In introducing this question, the Executive Director recalled that in 1991 the Council sent to the contracting parties of GATT a strong message urging a speedy and successful conclusion of the Uruguay Round. He said that the most recent initiatives of the European Economic Community (EEC) were welcome, but that neither a speedy nor successful conclusion of the Round was yet in evidence.

55. Many delegations shared the disappointment that no results had been reached after six years. Many Ministers stressed the need and importance of a successful conclusion of the Uruguay Round, in the interests of both developed and developing countries. The hope was expressed that every opportunity to achieve a positive outcome of the Round would be grasped.

56. Several developed country members indicated that they were well aware of the fact that higher food prices in the wake of trade liberalization might cause problems for a number of food-importing developing countries. In submitting their concessions to GATT, they had given due consideration to the interests of the developing countries. It was also emphasized that, while liberalizing world food trade, food aid should be maintained.

57. One developed country member said that, while favouring liberalization of agricultural markets, it was important to produce at least the basic foodstuffs within its own borders. Another developed country member expressed the hope that a recent decision on agricultural reform in a major trading area could provide a framework for the solution of the outstanding questions on agriculture in the GATT negotiations. Some member countries said, however, that they had only reluctantly accepted the text proposed in December 1991 by the Director-General of GATT, and any significant retreat from that text would be unacceptable. It was also said that comprehensive tariffication, without exception, was a prerequisite for a successful conclusion of the Uruguay Round.

2. The importance of greater political leadership and coordination by a strengthened Council in the fight against hunger

(Agenda item 3; WFC/1992/4)

58. Almost all member and observer States addressed the issue of the need for the improved functioning of the World Food Council. Various proposals regarding the Council's future role and status were discussed, including the suggestions contained in the background document (WFC/1992/4) prepared by the secretariat. Ministers also held an informal private meeting to discuss this item further.

59. Delegations reaffirmed their continued support for the important food-security and hunger-alleviation objectives proclaimed by the 1974 World Food Conference and subsequently endorsed by the General Assembly at its twenty-ninth session when it established the World Food Council. Nevertheless, it was considered that, in view of the new challenges and the increasing financial constraints facing the United Nations, the continuation of the status quo for the United Nations as a whole, and the World Food Council as an integral part, could not be assumed. In this regard, a number of delegates cited the message of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, which had drawn the Ministers' attention to the ongoing process of reform of the functioning and structures of the United Nations subsidiary machinery in the economic and social areas with a view to their streamlining. In supporting the need to avoid duplication of activities in the United Nations system, it was pointed out that institutional reforms would strengthen the whole organization and could help channel limited resources to the fight against hunger and malnutrition.

60. Ministers recognized the important achievements of the Council in the areas of consensus building on the nature of the hunger problem, increasing the political priority given to hunger-alleviation and providing general policy direction on food-security issues. Many delegations emphasized, however, the important mandate given to the World Food Council to coordinate the work of the United Nations in hunger-alleviation, and urged the Council secretariat to pursue this task more actively. It was suggested that a concrete programme of action on coordination be submitted to member States for their consideration. Several proposals were made to strengthen the Council's working relations with other organizations dealing with food-security issues, especially FAO, WFP, IFAD, the World Bank, UNDP and the CGIAR network, as well

as with non-governmental organizations. In this regard, the Executive Director's efforts to enhance cooperation and coordination among the four Rome-based food organizations were welcomed.

61. Concerning member States' own role in improving the functioning of the Council, several delegates urged that the role of the Bureau be strengthened, and perhaps its term of office extended beyond the present two years. Greater use of private meetings of ministers was encouraged, as well as closer interaction between the World Food Council and its parent body, the General Assembly, and the Economic and Social Council.

62. Some delegations considered that member States should be more involved in the preparation of ministerial sessions, including the selection of a few highly relevant items for the agenda. While a few delegations preferred to maintain the practice of holding annual sessions, more supported the secretariat's suggestion to biennialize ministerial sessions, perhaps having technical or regional meetings in alternate years. Some speakers thought ministerial sessions should be held in Rome, in conjunction with the FAO Conference held every two years. One delegation suggested not scheduling further WFC sessions until a final decision on the Council's future was taken. More systematic follow-up of Council recommendations, which should be more practically oriented and contain more "political bite", was also urged.

63. Regarding the World Food Council secretariat, the delegation of Italy stated that its Government was nominating a candidate for the post of Executive Director, which would soon be vacated by the retirement of the incumbent. There were differing views on the President's proposals to strengthen the secretariat, contained in his letter to the Secretary-General of the United Nations of 5 February 1992. It was generally held, however, that the best possible use of existing resources, both human and financial, should be made. Delegates supported retaining Rome as the headquarters for the secretariat, as that location allowed greater opportunities for collaboration with the other United Nations food organizations.

64. Various proposals for the further review of the World Food Council were discussed. One delegation suggested that the Economic and Social Council, at its substantive session of 1992, should review the mandate, operations and future prospects of the World Food Council. Some delegates saw this initiative in the context of the expected Economic and Social Council debate on certain proposals contained in the final report of the Nordic United Nations project entitled "The United Nations in development". Several members considered that the General Assembly, as the parent body of the World Food Council, was the only appropriate organ to carry out such a review. A number of delegations thought that the Secretary-General's message, as well as the Council's own terms of reference, required Council members themselves to provide suggestions for the future functioning of the Council. They proposed setting up a working group for this purpose, which would submit its proposals on behalf of the Council directly to the Secretary-General and the General Assembly. Those proposals should be practical and realistic and take into consideration the restructuring of the United Nations already under way in the economic and social fields.

65. The final conclusions and recommendations adopted by the Council by consensus at its present session included a decision to pursue reviews by both

the Council itself and the General Assembly. An ad hoc committee would be set up, composed of all interested Council member States, meeting at ministerial or delegate level, to meet in mid-September 1992 and to submit its recommendations to the Assembly at its forty-seventh session.

3. Other business

(Agenda item 4)

(a) Election of a Vice-President

66. The Council unanimously welcomed Mr. Anatoly N. Lifanchikov, newly designated Deputy Minister of Economics of the Russian Federation, as Vice-President of the World Food Council for the group of Eastern European States, replacing Mr. B. M. Volodin.

(b) Tribute to the outgoing Executive Director

67. The President invited the Council to join him in paying a tribute to Mr. Gerald I. Trant, whose term of office would expire at the end of June 1992. He expressed to Mr. Trant his own deep appreciation and that of the Council for his important contribution to the objectives and work of the Council in the fight against hunger and malnutrition in the world.

68. Mr. Trant took the opportunity to thank member States and representatives for their help and support over the years; the presidents under whom he had served and who had made such an important contribution to the Council's work; and all members of the staff for their hard work and dedication.

(c) Proposal of the Vice-President from Kenya

69. The Council Vice-President from Kenya proposed that the ad hoc committee to review the Council (see part one above, para. 34) consider recommending to the General Assembly the possibility of holding a second World Food Conference in 1994.

(d) Venue of the next session

70. The Council received with appreciation the invitation of the Government of Italy to act as host to the next ministerial session.

III. REPORT OF THE COUNCIL TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

A. Organization of work

71. The Council met four times in plenary session and once in closed session. Its conclusions and recommendations to the General Assembly were prepared by a drafting group consisting of two representatives each from four regional groups, and were adopted by consensus in the plenary. The members of the drafting group were: Central African Republic, Germany, Hungary, Japan, Kenya, Russian Federation, Thailand and United States of America.

B. Expression of gratitude to the Government and people of Kenya

72. The following expression of gratitude to the Government and people of Kenya was adopted:

The World Food Council,

Having convened its eighteenth ministerial session at Nairobi, from 23 to 26 June 1992, at the kind invitation of the Government of the Republic of Kenya,

1. Expresses its deep appreciation to the Government and people of the Republic of Kenya for the warmth, generous hospitality and most friendly welcome extended to all ministers, plenipotentiaries and other representatives and observers participating in the session;

2. Applauds the Government and people of the Republic of Kenya for the excellent conference facilities and other arrangements provided to all participants;

3. Requests the President of the Council to express, on behalf of all the members and observers participating in the session, its deep gratitude to the Government and people of Kenya.

73. Regional representatives paid a warm tribute to the President of Kenya, Mr. Daniel Toroitich arap Moi and, through him, to the Government and people of Kenya.

Notes

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 19 (A/46/19), part one.

2/ Ibid., Forty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 19 (A/44/19), part one.

3/ Ibid., Forty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 19 (A/46/19), part one.

4/ See Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992 (A/CONF.151/26), vol. I, chap. I.

ANNEX

List of documents before the Council at its eighteenth ministerial session

Document No.	Agenda item	Title
WFC/1992/1	1	Provisional agenda with annotations
WFC/1992/2	2 (a)	The global state of hunger and malnutrition: 1992 report
WFC/1992/3	2	Progress report of the Executive Director of the World Food Council
WFC/1992/3/Add.1	2 (b)	Implications of the changes in Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States for food security in developing countries: addendum to the progress report of the Executive Director
WFC/1992/3/Add.2	2 (d)	Migration and food security: addendum to the progress report of the Executive Director
WFC/1992/4	3	The importance of greater political leadership and coordination by a strengthened Council in the fight against hunger: a discussion framework
WFC/1992/5		FAO report on the current world food situation
WFC/1992/6		FAO report on the seventeenth session of the Committee on World Food Security
WFC/1992/7		WFP annual report on the Committee on Food Aid Policies and Programmes
WFC/1992/8		World Bank experience with hunger- and poverty-focused activities
WFC/1992/9		IFAD experience with hunger- and poverty-focused activities: the potential contribution by small farmers and women to development

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